

Building a Straight State: Sexuality and Social Citizenship under the 1944 G.I. Bill

Margot Canaday

For more than fifty years now, scholars have celebrated the G.I. Bill of Rights as one of the most important public policy innovations of the post-World War II era. The G.I. Bill is often credited with moving millions of working-class Americans into the middle class by democratizing higher education and home ownership and with ushering in the postwar economic boom. The G.I. Bill deserves celebration—it was one of the most far-reaching pieces of social policy legislation in the second half of the twentieth century. Yet while there is no denying the scope and scale of the G.I. Bill, the celebratory literature has not fully acknowledged the many exclusions built into the program. Some historians have noted that the design and implementation of the legislation made G.I. Bill benefits most accessible to white middle-class men. Much less commonly remarked upon is a 1945 Veterans Administration (VA) ruling that denied G.I. Bill benefits to any soldier with an undesirable discharge “issued because of homosexual acts or tendencies.”¹

Margot Canaday is a doctoral candidate at the University of Minnesota. This essay received the Louis Pelzer Memorial Award for 2003.

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Readers may contact Canaday at <canad002@umn.edu>.

¹ The celebratory literature on the G.I. Bill includes Michael J. Bennett, *When Dreams Came True: The G.I. Bill and the Making of Modern America* (Washington, 1996); Suzanne Mettler, “Bringing the State Back In to Civic Engagement: Policy Feedback Effects of the G.I. Bill for World War II Veterans,” *American Political Science Review*, 96 (June 2002), 351–65; Theda Skocpol, “Delivering for Young Families: The Resonance of the G.I. Bill,” *American Prospect*, 7 (Sept.–Oct. 1996), 66–72; and “The 1944 GI Bill of Rights: Redefining Citizenship for Veterans,” papers delivered at the annual meeting of the Organization of American Historians, Washington, D.C., April 2002 (in Margot Canaday’s possession). Historical accounts that highlight the program’s gender or racial exclusions include Susan M. Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s* (Boston, 1982); Nancy F. Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge, Mass., 2000); and David H. Onkst, “First a Negro . . . Incidentally a Veteran”: Black World War Two Veterans and the G.I. Bill of Rights in the Deep South, 1944–1948,” *Journal of Social History*, 31 (Spring 1998), 517–44. For a compelling account of exclusions from G.I. Bill benefits based on race, class, and gender that pays only passing attention to sexuality, see Elizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers’ Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York, 2003). For excerpts from the 1945 Veterans Administration (VA) ruling, see Donald Webster Cory, *The Homosexual in Amer-*

The G.I. Bill deserves consideration by historians because it was the first federal policy that explicitly excluded gays and lesbians from the economic benefits of the welfare state. Feminist historians have already observed that embedded in the G.I. Bill, as in other welfare state social provision, was a heterosexual norm that positioned male heads of households as the most deserving citizens.² But feminist historians have uncovered the heterosexual bias of the G.I. Bill (and welfare state programs more generally) by analyzing how state benefits were filtered through marriage.³ Those historians have focused, in other words, on one-half of an imagined binary (heterosexuality) while leaving the other half (homosexuality) mostly in the shadows. This essay, by contrast, examines the G.I. Bill from the vantage point of those who were excluded from its benefits because of homosexuality. This focus makes clear that soldiers discharged for homosexuality were not just inadvertently excluded from the economic benefits of the G.I. Bill because they did not fit into the normative heterosexual family model through which benefits were primarily channeled. Rather, homosexual exclusion was explicit, built into the very foundation of the welfare state.

My concern is not only with the development of the VA policy on homosexuality and its impact on the men and women who were subject to it, but with what the policy reveals about the development of American citizenship more generally. Particularly relevant to my examination of the G.I. Bill is the classic 1950 work by the British sociologist T. H. Marshall, "Citizenship and Social Class." Written during the immediate postwar period that my article chronicles, Marshall's essay remains at the center of contemporary discussions of citizenship and the welfare state. Numerous historians have been influenced by Marshall's concept of *social citizenship*, the idea that all citizens have a right to a "modicum of economic welfare and security." Marshall argued that citizenship progressed historically through three overlapping stages. Civil citizenship, involving the right to property, liberty, justice, and due process of law, occurred in the eighteenth century. Political citizenship, involving the right to vote and to participate in the political process, was a nineteenth-century development. Citizenship would become truly democratic only when the stage of social citizenship was attained, when citizens' basic economic needs were met so that they could participate to the fullest extent in the social and political life of their

ica: *A Subjective Approach* (New York, 1951), 278–79. After Cory's work, the first discussion of homosexual exclusion from the G.I. Bill appeared in Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II* (New York, 1990). This essay builds on that pathbreaking research by situating it in relation to the feminist literature on citizenship and the welfare state and further exploring the legislative history of the G.I. Bill, the development of VA policy on homosexuality, and the postwar evolution of military discharge policy.

² See, for example, Cott, *Public Vows*; Cohen, *Consumers' Republic*; Hartmann, *Home Front and Beyond*; and Gretchen Ritter, "Of War and Virtue: Gender, American Citizenship, and Veterans' Benefits after World War II," in *Comparative Study of Conscription in the Armed Forces*, ed. Lars Mjøset and Stephen Van Holde (Amsterdam, 2002), 201–26.

³ This statement most closely describes Cott, *Public Vows*; but see also Hartmann, *Home Front and Beyond*; and Cohen, *Consumers' Republic*. Other feminist works also clarify the relationship between welfare state benefits and marriage; see Linda Gordon, *Pitied but Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890–1935* (Cambridge, Mass., 1994); and Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (New York, 2001). On women's access to veterans' preference points, a related and important advantage though not a welfare state benefit, see Linda K. Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York, 1998), esp. 221–302.

nation.⁴ Writing in the mid-twentieth century, Marshall saw in the postwar British welfare state the social programs that would inaugurate the social citizenship stage.⁵

The American welfare state was more miserly than its British counterpart, but many policy makers hoped that the G.I. Bill would serve as an opening wedge that would lead to a universal system of entitlements for all citizens. The G.I. Bill, which complemented preexisting veterans' benefits such as hospitalization and disability pensions, created a self-contained welfare state for eligible veterans. The landmark legislation provided support for veterans pursuing education and training; an unemployment allowance; loans for the purchase of a home, farm, or small business; and a veterans' employment service. By 1948, the G.I. Bill represented 15 percent of the federal budget. Veterans constituted nearly half the student body of colleges and universities across the country. Some 2 million veterans took out loans under the program. Veterans' benefits—which along with Social Security outlays represented the largest portion of the welfare state—were the kind of social provision that Marshall believed had the potential to democratize citizenship.⁶

But close attention to the VA's use of homosexuality to restrict veterans' benefits demonstrates that the G.I. Bill did not simply democratize citizenship. Rather, the G.I. Bill resulted in a simultaneous expansion and contraction in citizenship—opening up education and home ownership for many working- and middle-class Americans while it explicitly prevented soldiers discharged for homosexuality from taking advantage of those same benefits. Even as citizenship was supposedly becoming more democratic, then, the status of citizen did not confer a shared set of benefits. Rather, benefits were selectively distributed to differentiate first- and second-class citizens, a differentiation that not only set soldiers above civilians but, as the VA policy makes clear, simultaneously relied on ascriptive characteristics such as sexual identity to separate the deserving from the undeserving.

⁴ T. H. Marshall, "Citizenship and Social Class," in *The Citizenship Debates: A Reader*, ed. Gershon Shafir (Minneapolis, 1998), 93–111, esp. 94. Marshall's essay is "the founding document" of modern citizenship studies, according to Engin F. Isin and Patricia K. Wood, *Citizenship and Identity* (London, 1999), 25. See also J. M. Barbalet, *Citizenship: Rights, Struggle, and Class Inequality* (Minneapolis, 1988). For an important critique, see Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon, "Civil Citizenship against Social Citizenship? On the Ideology of Contract-Versus-Charity," in *The Condition of Citizenship*, ed. Bart van Steenberg (London, 1994), 90–107. For other feminist discussions of Marshall and social citizenship, see Nancy F. Cott, "Marriage and Women's Citizenship in the United States, 1830–1934," *American Historical Review*, 103 (Dec. 1998), 1440–74; Linda K. Kerber, "The Meanings of Citizenship," *Journal of American History*, 84 (Dec. 1997), 833–54; and Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity*.

⁵ Some queer theorists have proposed a fourth stage, seeing "sexual liberation . . . [as] an important component of a civilized and democratic society" and advocating "sexual rights" as an important extension of Marshall's model of the three stages of citizenship." This useful development in the theorization of sexuality and citizenship should not elide questions about how Marshall's three stages of citizenship have also been organized by ideas about normative sexuality. See Eileen H. Richardson and Bryan S. Turner, "Sexual, Intimate, or Reproductive Citizenship?," *Citizenship Studies*, 5 (Nov. 2001), 329–38, esp. 330.

⁶ Edwin Amenta, *Bold Relief: Institutional Politics and the Origins of Modern Social Policy* (Princeton, 1998), esp. 191–230; Edwin Amenta and Theda Skocpol, "Redefining the New Deal: World War II and the Development of Social Provision in the United States," in *The Politics of Social Policy in the United States*, ed. Margaret Weir, Ann Shola Orloff, and Theda Skocpol (Princeton, 1988), 94, 104; Samantha Sparks, "The G.I. Bill: The Rites of Its Passage" (M.A. thesis, Duke University, 2001), 20–24, 96; Kathleen Jill Frydl, "The G.I. Bill" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2000), 201. "Study after study," Elizabeth Cohen writes, "has documented that World War II veterans achieved substantially higher median incomes, educational attainments, home ownership rates, and net worths than non-veterans of comparable age." Cohen, *Consumers' Republic*, 138.

The VA's policy on homosexual exclusion was extremely significant, even though it was only partly successful in keeping benefits out of the hands of gay and lesbian soldiers. While approximately nine thousand World War II-era soldiers and sailors were denied G.I. Bill benefits because they were undesirably discharged for homosexuality, it is very likely that an even greater number of soldiers who experienced and even acted upon homosexual desire went undetected and were thus able to use the G.I. Bill.⁷ But the claims of such soldiers were rendered insecure by the VA regulation, which explicitly wrote homosexual exclusion into federal welfare state policy for the first time. And that insecurity—made visible by the numerous soldiers who actually were denied benefits by the VA policy because of homosexual offenses—reinforced heterosexuality as normative for the entire citizenry.

Veterans had received some assistance after previous wars, but the scope of G.I. Bill support was unprecedented. The G.I. Bill was a cornerstone of postwar planning, and the generosity of the program was based, in part, on gratitude to returning veterans who had suffered severe disruption and hardship during the war. It was also based on a broader cultural fear of the possibility of another depression and the social instability that 16 million unemployed veterans might provoke, of "a military group returning to find their services no longer needed, [of] a working class without jobs," as the veteran Charles G. Bolte put it in 1945. "Those veterans have learned to fight," warned the American Legion, the leading veterans' organization, in its promotion of the G.I. Bill; "they are not going to be stopped." Legislators remembered the World War I veterans who had formed a "bonus army" and marched on Washington to demand their bonuses; they worried that a new generation of World War II veterans would wander the country aimlessly if not directed in some way. The country would have "a lot of trouble," Sen. Harley Kilgore warned, if soldiers were not given "a cooling off period" after the war "in which they are learning something useful."⁸

⁷ For an estimate that between 1941 and 1945, more than 4,000 sailors and 5,000 soldiers were so discharged, see Bérubé, *Coming Out under Fire*, 147. On the greater number who might have been considered eligible for such discharges but were not, see *ibid.*, 245. According to Alfred C. Kinsey's midcentury reports, roughly 4% of adult men and 2% of adult women were exclusively homosexual. By those estimates, perhaps half a million or more of the 16 million men and women who served during World War II would have been exclusively homosexual—a number that dwarfs the 9,000 undesirably discharged for homosexuality. See Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell B. Pomeroy, and Clyde E. Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948; Bloomington, 1998), 610–66, esp. 651; Alfred C. Kinsey et al., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (Philadelphia, 1953), 446–501, and John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940–1970* (Chicago, 1983), 35. I avoid the shorthand "homosexual veteran" or "homosexual soldier" to refer to persons undesirably discharged from the military for homosexuality because homosexuality was not a fully consolidated identity category then—some persons defined as homosexual by military policy understood themselves in those terms in those years; some would come to view themselves that way later; some would never describe themselves as "homosexual."

⁸ Veterans from the Revolutionary War, the Civil War Union forces, the Spanish-American War, and World War I received compensation from the federal government—typically land grants, cash bonuses, or pensions. Sparks, "G.I. Bill," 57. See also Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992). "This bill is undoubtedly more extensive and generous in its benefits to returning veterans than any bill previously introduced as to this or any other war," stated a Senate committee. "We believe that this is entirely justifiable in view of the character of service in this war." U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Finance, *Providing Federal Government Aid for the Readjustment in Civilian Life of Returning*

Support for the G.I. Bill gained momentum as it moved through Congress, despite the initial opposition of some New Dealers (including Franklin D. Roosevelt) to the exclusion of civilians from the extensive benefits of the bill. The New Dealers believed, according to the social scientists Edwin Amenta and Theda Skocpol, "that the needs of ex-soldiers should be met chiefly through programs directed at the entire population." Indeed, Roosevelt had bravely gone to an American Legion convention to tell veterans that "no person, because he wore a uniform must thereafter be placed in a special class of beneficiaries over and above all other citizens." Such sentiments led Roosevelt to prefer a competing version of the G.I. Bill that distributed benefits to civilians as well as veterans.⁹

The Veterans Administration, under the leadership of an anti-New Deal Republican, Frank Hines, was committed to a different set of principles: First, the VA should be designated as the agency to provide *all* services to returning veterans, and second, civilians should in no way be brought into programs for returning veterans. "Whenever the opportunity arose to win benefits for veterans that would be denied to other citizens," Amenta writes, "the VA jumped at it." Closely allied with the VA, the American Legion drafted the numerous proposals for programs for veterans into a single omnibus bill. The resulting legislation expressed the commitment of the American Legion and the VA to the idea that civilians not join veterans in collecting benefits. Indeed, the historian Kathleen Jill Frydl notes that the American Legion continued to fight against civilian benefits long after the G.I. Bill was enacted; it opposed not only the "intermingling of civilians and veterans" but also "the granting of any greater benefits to civilians than those granted to veterans."¹⁰

With an increasingly conservative Congress committed to abolishing New Deal reforms and with growing popular support for a veterans' bill, the VA's vision of post-war reform triumphed over Roosevelt's. Conservatives supported the bill, in the historian Alan Brinkley's words, "precisely because the program was limited to veterans," directing benefits to an especially deserving segment of the citizenry. New Deal liberals initially opposed the legislation but eventually signed onto the program in the hopes that, according to Brinkley, the G.I. Bill would become the basis of a "broader network of programs aimed at the whole population." Even Roosevelt changed his position on benefits for veterans, stating that soldiers had "been compelled to make a greater . . . sacrifice than the rest of us."¹¹

World War II Veterans, 78 Cong., 2 sess., March 18, 1944, p. 2. Charles G. Bolte, *The New Veteran* (New York, 1945), 49. During World War II 16 million men and women served in the military. See Gary Nash et al., *The American People: Creating a Nation and a Society* (2 vols., New York, 1994), II, 874. For the American Legion statement, see Frydl, "G.I. Bill," 147. U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Military Affairs, *Hearings on S. 1730 and S. 1893*, 78 Cong., 2 sess., June 14, 1944, p. 343.

⁹ Amenta and Skocpol, "Redefining the New Deal," 85; Frydl, "G.I. Bill," 47, 23.

¹⁰ Amenta, *Bold Relief*, 247; Frydl, "G.I. Bill," 75, esp. 150 and 402. The VA, created in 1930, absorbed the post-Civil War Bureau of Pensions and small veterans' bureaus established after other wars. Initially a low-profile agency, after World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, the VA had an annual budget exceeding that of any other federal agency except the Department of Defense. George T. Kurian, ed., *Historical Guide to the U.S. Government* (New York, 1998), 608–13.

¹¹ Brian Waddell, *The War against the New Deal: World War II and American Democracy* (Dekalb, 2001), 132; Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York, 1995), 259. See Amenta, *Bold Relief*, 247.

The version of the bill that Congress passed was generous in that it offered full benefits to all who had served a minimum of ninety days and received a discharge "under conditions other than dishonorable." The implicit rationale behind the eligibility policy was that while military service was an obligation of citizenship, such service deserved to be rewarded when faithfully rendered. "Basically, every citizen has a duty to serve in the armed forces," noted a navy report (which conflated "citizen" and "man"), but the G.I. Bill was "passed by a grateful Congress for the benefit of persons who served . . . during World War II." From the outset it was clear that dishonorably discharged soldiers, regardless of the length of their service, had not earned entitlement to G.I. Bill benefits, whereas soldiers who were separated with honorable discharges after even brief service had.¹²

Yet all branches of the service awarded a series of discharges that ranged between honorable and dishonorable. The commonest of the in-between discharges was called an "undesirable," or "blue," discharge because the document was printed on blue paper. The blue discharge was an administrative discharge imposed after a hearing. Those who gave evidence of "undesirable habits or traits of character" were required to appear before a board of three officers. The board could not hand down a prison sentence, but neither did it follow court-martial procedure—it was not bound by rules of evidence, and those appearing before it were not entitled to counsel. The discharge had been in existence since World War I. But it came into much greater usage during World War II, when it was often used for the quick removal from the service of a soldier whose offenses did not merit a court-martial or in cases when the service did not choose to devote the resources or provide the procedural protections involved in a court-martial.¹³

The proposed legislation made all soldiers who were discharged "under conditions other than dishonorable" eligible for the G.I. Bill in order to protect undesirably discharged soldiers. Army and navy representatives objected to this terminology and urged Congress to limit the extension of benefits to soldiers discharged "under honorable conditions." Without that limitation, Admiral Jacobs of the navy warned a senator, "benefits will be extended to those persons who will have been given . . . undesirable discharges [and] might have a detrimental effect on morale." But members of Congress argued that the legislation should distribute benefits broadly. Presented with the objections of the military to the more generous terminology, Congresswoman Edith Nourse Rogers commented, "I would rather take the chance so that all deserving men get their benefits." During hearings on the G.I. Bill, Chairman John Rankin of the House Committee on World War Veteran's Legislation declared, "I am for the most liberal terms." Whether benefits would be distributed to

¹² Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (G.I. Bill of Rights), Pub. L. No. 78-346, 58 Stat. 284; Commander-in-Chief Atlantic and U.S. Atlantic Fleet to Secretary of Defense, June 1946, file 292, box 800, Decimal File G-1 Personnel, Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs, 1860-1952, RG 165 (National Archives, College Park, Md.).

¹³ U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Military Affairs, *Blue Discharges*, 79 Cong., 2 sess., Jan. 30, 1946, pp. 3-4. World War I records show 24,260 discharges issued that lay in between honorable and dishonorable discharges. See file 211, box 37, AGO Legislative and Policy Precedent Files, 1943-1975, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, RG 407 (National Archives, College Park, Md.). Bérubé, *Coming Out under Fire*, 129-48.

soldiers discharged "under honorable conditions" or under conditions "other than dishonorable" was a major point of controversy during Senate debate on the Bill. The Senate report on proposed G.I. Bill legislation concluded:

Many persons who have served faithfully and even with distinction are released from the service for relatively minor offenses, receiving a so-called blue discharge. . . . It is the opinion of the committee that such offenses should not bar entitlement to benefits otherwise bestowed unless the offense was such as, for example [the act of a deserter or of a conscientious objector] . . . to constitute dishonorable conditions.

Accordingly, when Congress finally enacted the veterans' legislation, it authorized benefits to all who had been discharged "under conditions other than dishonorable." The military itself interpreted the new legislation as granting benefits to soldiers with undesirable discharges: "The recently enacted 'G.I.' legislation," explained the army's adjutant general, "contains provisions under which it appears that [those with blue discharges] are eligible for . . . benefits."¹⁴

But the VA would exploit the ambiguity of the eligibility requirements in administering the new law. In the text of the G.I. Bill, Congress had specified only that those who were conscientious objectors, had deserted, or had refused to wear the uniform should be barred "under any laws administered by the Veterans Administration." But rather than viewing that list as a complete enumeration of the offenses that would justify a discharge under dishonorable conditions, the VA vastly expanded its own powers by declaring that it would make that determination on a case-by-case basis. "The matter of definition is left to . . . the Veterans' Administration," declared one VA official. The VA then mandated that, although distinct from a dishonorable discharge (which required a court-martial conviction), an undesirable discharge could take place *under honorable or dishonorable conditions*. A soldier with an undesirable discharge could receive benefits only if the VA determined that he had been discharged under "honorable conditions."¹⁵

Many soldiers accused of homosexuality during World War II were caught in this limbo between an honorable and a dishonorable discharge. As a result of a determined effort by military psychiatrists to reduce the blanket use of the court-martial for homosexual offenses, in early 1943 the military began systematically to issue the blue discharge to soldiers suspected of homosexuality.¹⁶ The new policy relied on a

¹⁴ *Congressional Record*, 78 Cong., 2 sess., March 24, 1944, p. 3077; Roland Young, *Congressional Politics in the Second World War* (New York, 1956), 214; *Congressional Record*, 78 Cong., 2 sess., June 13, 1944, p. 5890; U.S. Congress, House, Committee on World War Veterans' Legislation, *Hearings on H.R. 3917 and S. 1767*, 78 Cong., 1 sess., March 30, 1944, p. 419; Committee on Finance, *Providing Federal Government Aid for the Readjustment in Civilian Life of Returning World War II Veterans*, 15; Adjutant General to James Burke, District Attorney, Sept. 28, 1944, file 211, box 36, AGO Legislative and Policy Precedent Files, Records of the Adjutant General's Office.

¹⁵ The law is quoted in Committee on Military Affairs, *Blue Discharges*, 8. *Ibid.*, 9; Luther Ellis to Mr. Hiller, Oct. 30, 1944, Policy Series 800.04, Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, 1773-1976, RG 15 (National Archives, Washington, D.C.); Frank T. Hines, "Legal Bars Under Section 300, Public No. 346, 78 Cong., and Character of Discharge Under Public No. 2, 73 Cong., As Amended, and Public No. 346, 78 Cong.," Oct. 30, 1944, vol. 2, *ibid.*; Committee on Military Affairs, *Blue Discharges*, 9.

¹⁶ The new discharge policy complemented "a tightening of anti-homosexual screening standards" during

three-part typology for understanding homosexuality. At the one end of the spectrum was the violent offender who committed sodomy by force and was subject to court-martial. At the other end of the spectrum, to be treated and returned to duty, was the "casual" homosexual who had engaged in homosexuality due to curiosity or intoxication. Finally—in between these two extremes—the "true pervert" was to be discharged undesirably. The policy shift, which emphasized discharge over court-martial (and imprisonment), finally earned the support of military hard-liners because it preserved prison as an option for the most egregious offenses while providing the military with an extremely efficient way to remove those with "undesirable habits or traits" from the service. Ironically, while military psychiatrists advocated the blue discharge for homosexuality because it was more humane than imprisonment, the new discharge policy vastly expanded the military's regulatory and surveillance apparatus and made it much easier to remove soldiers suspected of homosexual acts or tendencies. In short, the military was able to use the blue discharge to remove soldiers for homosexuality with far less evidence than would be necessary for court-martial.¹⁷

In addition to undesirable discharges given to drug addicts, bed wetters, alcoholics, and African American soldiers who challenged racism in their units, the army issued around 5,000 undesirable discharges for homosexuality during World War II. Some 4,000 sailors were undesirably discharged for homosexuality from the navy during the same period. The discharge carried a heavy stigma. The Henry Foundation, a New York organization that assisted homosexuals in trouble with the law, stated that the undesirable discharge, "following a man through the years," was "too great a punishment." The organization reported that it had "been consulted on several occasions by citizens and [veterans' organizations] in their efforts to lighten what in many cases has been an intolerably unjust burden." Congressman John Rankin declared that he would rather come home with a *dishonorable* discharge than as "neither fish nor fowl," with an undesirable discharge that "I would have to explain for the rest of my life."¹⁸

induction. In 1942 screening regulations "for the first time defined both the homosexual and the normal person . . . and clarified procedures for rejecting gay draftees," and the adjutant general ordered Women's Army Corps (WAC) recruiters to consider "undesirable habits and traits," including homosexual tendencies, among female applicants. See Bérubé, *Coming Out under Fire*, chap. 1, esp. 19, 30. See Leisa D. Meyer, *Creating G.I. Jane: Sexuality and Power in the Women's Army Corps during World War II* (New York, 1996). On the struggle of psychiatrists to reform the military's discharge policy, see Bérubé, *Coming Out under Fire*, 129–48.

¹⁷ The policy was clearer in the abstract than in practice. It presented commanders with an array of categories and no simple way to distinguish between "true perverts" who had committed homosexual acts and "latent" homosexuals who had not engaged in homosexual acts while in the service but had perhaps confessed homosexual desires to a military psychiatrist, doctor, or chaplain. "Where previously only those men who had been caught in the sexual act and convicted in court were punished, now merely being homosexual or having such 'tendencies' could entrap both men and women, label them as sick, and remove them from the service with an undesirable discharge," Bérubé writes. See Bérubé, *Coming Out under Fire*, 146–47.

¹⁸ Between December 7, 1941, and June 30, 1945, the army issued 51,963 undesirable discharges. See Committee on Military Affairs, *Blue Discharges*, 3; and Bérubé, *Coming Out under Fire*, 232. George Henry, "Report of the Psychiatrist-in-Chief," April 15, 1949, pp. 8–9, box 62, Society for the Prevention of Crime Papers (Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, Columbia University, New York, N.Y.); U.S. Congress, House, Committee on World War Veterans' Legislation, *Hearings on H.R. 3749 and Related Bills*, 79 Cong., 1 sess., June 20, 1945, p. 159. Homosexuality seems to be the subtext of the phrase "neither fish nor fowl," probably signifying the liminal state of the homosexual as authentically neither male nor female.

While the VA had assumed responsibility for deciding which undesirables would be eligible for benefits, agency officials were initially confused about how to adjudicate individual cases. "This office is having considerable difficulty in defining the term 'under conditions other than dishonorable,'" the VA administrator, Frank Hines, wrote to Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal in 1944. As a result, the VA began to construct more explicit guidelines for adjudicating benefits. In October of that year, the VA used language from the World War Veterans' Act of 1924 to argue that any discharge for an offense involving "moral turpitude" would constitute a discharge under dishonorable conditions. But in enacting this policy, the VA ignored statutory guidelines from the 1924 law that had required that a soldier be *convicted* by a civil or military court before being disqualified from benefits. A memo from VA headquarters expressed frustration that local VA offices were following the language of the 1924 legislation more literally and were awarding benefits to veterans with blue discharges as long as they had not been convicted under civil or military law. One adjudicator, facing numerous cases of soldiers given undesirable discharges for homosexuality, wrote in to ask whether "in the absence of any . . . convictions by court martial" such discharges were to be considered as under dishonorable conditions.¹⁹

As the letter indicates, the VA's policy on eligibility for undesirables confused some adjudicators—why wouldn't a discharge that was not dishonorable fall into the category "under conditions other than dishonorable"? The muddled language of the statute was compounded by the situation of service members discharged for homosexuality, only some of whom were charged with committing homosexual acts, and many of whom had stellar service records. To some VA adjudicators, such soldiers must have seemed the sort Congress had in mind when it added to the G.I. Bill the "liberalizing provision" that those whose service had been "meritorious, honest, and faithful" were not to be deprived of benefits.²⁰

In April 1945 Administrator Hines responded to such confusion by issuing an order that addressed homosexuality explicitly. The policy held that an undesirable discharge because of homosexual acts or tendencies "generally will be considered as under dishonorable conditions and a bar to entitlement." But that order did not end debate on the issue. A 1946 letter from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) challenged the new VA policy. The ACLU asserted that because a blue discharge was not a dishonorable discharge, it was awarded under conditions other than dishonor-

¹⁹ Frank T. Hines to Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal, Aug. 9, 1944, Policy Series 807, Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs; Hines, "Legal Bars Under Section 300, Public No. 346, 78 Cong., and Character of Discharge Under Public No. 2, 73 Cong., As Amended, and Public No. 346, 78 Cong.," Solicitor to Board of Veterans' Appeals, memo, Sept. 28, 1945, Policy Series 300.5, Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs; World War Veterans Act of 1924, Pub. L. No. 68-242, 43 Stat. 607; Adjudication Officer W. F. Greene to Director, Veterans' Claims Service, April 21, 1945, vol. 2, Policy Series 800.04, Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

²⁰ Homosexuals "may even turn out to be excellent soldiers," according to "Soldiers and Sex," *Newsweek*, July 26, 1943, pp. 70, 72. "Section 1503 . . . requires a discharge or release from active service under honorable conditions as a prerequisite to entitlement to benefits . . . but adds a liberalizing provision, to the effect that, except as to persons dishonorably discharged, benefits to which a person otherwise would be entitled but for a discharge under other than honorable conditions may be awarded if his service is shown to be otherwise meritorious, honest, and faithful." Committee on Finance, *Providing Federal Government Aid for the Readjustment in Civilian Life of Returning World War II Veterans*, 16.

able and the denial of benefits was illegal. The VA's response to this letter was simply to reassert the text of the new policy on homosexuality. Likewise, when local offices continued to request assistance in adjudicating the eligibility of veterans discharged for homosexuality, headquarters dismissed their queries with pronouncements that the policy was "fully comprehensive and sufficiently clear" and discouraged them from submitting claims to Washington "unless unusual facts are present."²¹

While the military awarded the undesirable discharge for a variety of traits or behaviors that rendered a soldier unsuitable, a discharge for homosexuality was the only type of undesirable discharge that led to a separate policy from the VA. In his mid-twentieth-century account of homosexual life in America, Donald Webster Cory observed that the VA policy denying benefits to soldiers discharged for homosexuality was "one of the last orders of an outgoing administrator." Some explanation for the policy may indeed rest in Hines's biography. Hines was appointed to head the Veterans Bureau by President Warren G. Harding in 1923 and then reappointed by presidents Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover. During the Great Depression, he fought to block early disbursement of the bonus payment to World War I veterans, insisting that the government had already "dealt most generously with its veterans." In 1930, the Veterans Bureau became the Veterans Administration, and Hines was appointed its first administrator. He ran the agency tightly, "emerging with a [budget] surplus every year." Even after the passage of the G.I. Bill, observed the *New York Times*, "under General Hines's administration, there were no complaints of extravagance."²²

Hines, a conservative Republican, shared with other New Deal opponents the belief that too much social provision could harm the recipients. "He has often expressed fear that the moral fiber of the American people is in danger of being undermined through work relief and security programs," a 1944 biographical sketch reported of the VA administrator. "He has . . . expressed the opinion that one hundred dollars a month from a Government relief or Social Security program would induce many citizens to give up all effort to get private employment." Hines's philosophy was shared by others concerned about the way the G.I. Bill was implemented, particularly the "52-20 Club," which provided unemployed veterans twenty dollars a week for up to fifty-two weeks. "Benefits should not encourage laziness," warned a navy report on the G.I. Bill. For "many unmarried servicemen without responsibilities [the 52-20 Club] offered a one year vacation with pay." Implicit in such warnings was the idea that besides soldiering, the male citizen's key obligation was to work. If overly generous benefits freed men of that obligation, such benefits would create weak and dependent men. Hines's overall frugality may have resulted in a specific policy barring homosexual soldiers from benefits because of these broader cultural

²¹ Committee on Military Affairs, *Blue Discharges*, 8-9; Clifford Forster, American Civil Liberties Union, to Omar Bradley, Veterans Administration, Jan. 18, 1946, Policy Series 800, Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs; O. W. Clark, Veterans Administration, to Forster, Feb. 2, 1946, *ibid.*; George E. Brown, Director of Veterans Claims Service, to Manager, "Instructions Numbers 1, 2, and 3, Sections 300 and 1503, Public No. 346, 78th Congress," memo, May 11, 1945, vol. 2, Policy Series 800.04, *ibid.*

²² Cory, *Homosexual in America*, 278-79; *Current Biography 1944* (New York, 1945), 296-99; *New York Times*, April 5, 1960, p. 37.

associations linking immorality, male effeminacy, and economic dependency. Moreover, in drawing on the association between generous entitlement and moral decline, the VA's antihomosexual policy justified the agency's dismissal of congressional intentions to distribute benefits broadly, a dismissal that some undesirably discharged soldiers would soon challenge.²³

The VA's policy on blue discharges did not make sense to some undesirably discharged veterans and their families. One mother whose son had told her that his undesirable discharge was on account of homosexuality called the War Department to ask for clarification. "They told me," she reported to her son, "that every soldier who does not hold a dishonorable discharge is entitled to the G.I. [Bill of] Rights." Trying to allay her son's fears that he would receive nothing for his time in the service, his mother incorrectly reassured him, "I think someone is trying to hand you a terrific line. . . . No one can see how they can withhold [your benefits]."²⁴

The economic value of the benefits was extremely important to many veterans. "If anything should prevent my future education," worried one veteran discharged for homosexuality, "I'd be sunk because the money to carry on myself is simply not available." Going to college on the G.I. Bill or buying a house or starting a business with a VA loan were indeed critical steps toward occupational achievement and financial stability. But it was not the economic benefits alone that made the G.I. Bill important to veterans. Collecting on the entitlements of the program also brought honor to many families who had never sent a son or daughter to college or had never owned a home. Just as collecting benefits conferred honor on the recipient, the economic costs of being denied G.I. Bill benefits could not be separated from the stigma of the discharge. "The Veterans' Administration is taking such an attitude and if they can get any control regarding the G.I. Bill of Rights, my life will be ruined," one soldier wrote another. "The Millhizers are not wealthy and without the aid of the government, school is practically out of the question and if my family ever found out it would be awful, because Mother worships the ground I walk on and she could never take it." The letter of another soldier discharged for homosexuality expressed the inseparability of the stigma from the economic penalties of the discharge:

²³ *Current Biography* 1944, 298; Commander-in-Chief Atlantic and U.S. Atlantic Fleet to Secretary of Defense, June 1946, file 292, box 800, Decimal File G-1 Personnel, Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs. On the opposition of trade unionists to universal entitlement programs lest such programs create "cringing" and dependent men, see Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity*, 68. Postwar culture tended to conflate effeminacy, weakness, and homosexuality. The connections between degeneration due to excessive social provision and the threat of same-sex sexuality that figured in domestic social policy had a counterpart in Cold War foreign policy. See, for example, K. A. Cuordileone, "Politics in an Age of Anxiety: Cold War Political Culture and the Crisis in American Masculinity, 1949–1960," *Journal of American History*, 87 (Sept. 2000), 515–45; and Robert L. Griswold, "The 'Flabby American,' the Body, and the Cold War," in *A Shared Experience: Men, Women, and the History of Gender*, ed. Laura McCall and Donald Yacovone (New York, 1998), 323–48.

²⁴ Mother to "Dear," 1944, box 4, World War II Project Records (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Historical Society of Northern California, San Francisco, Calif.). The World War II Project Records comprise mostly the primary sources Bérubé collected while researching *Coming Out under Fire*. I am very grateful to Bérubé for making those sources available to other researchers.

Now I'm up against it. What is painfully embarrassing is that [blue] discharge. . . . What am I to do? Starve? Be kicked around because things got too much for me to bear? Because I really am in need, and unemployed, and willing and able to re-enlist, if only they will take me on, provisionally or otherwise, so I can disprove once and for all what nonsense appears in my case record.²⁵

The stigma of the blue discharge was exacerbated by its association with homosexuality. These soldiers bear "the stigmatization of an 'other than honorable' discharge and must face all the problems of explanation at home," reported an army captain, "especially when the reason, such as homosexuality, has been a guarded secret." But different families handled the stigma differently. "I really can't see where you can think that coming home would be anything desperate to face," one mother told her son. "We all know dozens of boys who are out of the service on psychiatric discharges." She attempted to calm her son's fears that friends and neighbors would discover his blue discharge. "Have you ever seen daddy's discharge? Did anyone important ever ask to see it? Are you sure that it was an honorable one?"²⁶

But despite this mother's assurances, employers and universities did ask to see discharge papers, often with devastating results for veterans. "These 'blues' do hold a veteran back in so many ways," commented a soldier who had been denied his pre-war position after an employer saw his blue discharge. "I really am . . . determined to clear myself," another veteran wrote, "it is an obstacle, and I can't tolerate it much longer." Indeed, government and military officials began to worry that the denial of rights and benefits stigmatized undesirably discharged soldiers so severely that they were unable to reenter society. The "individual is not going to become a very useful citizen to society if he is walking around with a blue discharge," Congressman B. W. Kearney fretted during debate on the G.I. Bill. A decade later, the navy's 1956 Crittendon Report warned that "the service is creating a group of unemployables by [issuing] the undesirable discharges." Many World War II soldiers—especially those who had been drafted—came home enraged that their blue discharges were actually closing doors that were open to them before the war. "I cannot prevent myself from feeling outraged at the injustice of the government's returning me to a society with whose contempt I shall be in constant struggle," one man wrote in a letter, "and further burdening me with the stigma which is automatically attached to the person receiving a [blue discharge]."²⁷

Faced with both social stigma and the loss of benefits, veterans responded in a variety of ways. Some disregarded the blue discharge and applied for benefits anyway. "I filed an appeal at the Veterans' Administration in Kansas City to claim compensation for a nervous condition sustained in the Service," one soldier told a friend, pre-

²⁵ Milqui to Harold, March 6, Feb. 20, 1945, box 4, *ibid.*; Francesco to VA Administrator Omar Bradley, Oct. 19, 1945, case 4217128, Veterans' Claims Service, obtained through Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to Department of Veterans Affairs (in Canaday's possession).

²⁶ Wilson R. G. Bender, "Rehabilitation and the Returning Veteran," *Mental Hygiene*, 29 (Jan. 1945), 29; Mother to Harold, 1944, Nov. 1944, box 4, World War II Project Records.

²⁷ Soldier to Sen. Lister Hill, Aug. 28, 1946, box 6, World War II Project Records; Francesco to Maj. Frederick Vater, May 6, 1945, case 4217128, Veterans' Claims Service (in Canaday's possession); *Congressional Record*, 78 Cong., 2 sess., May 12 1944, p. 4454; E. Lawrence Gibson, *Get off My Ship* (New York, 1978), 361; Harold to Blanche, Nov. 18, 1944, box 4, World War II Project Records.

dicting that his claim would be rejected as a result of his blue discharge. Another veteran told of an acquaintance with a blue discharge who "was getting his readjustment allowance." But receiving benefits in the first instance offered no assurance of keeping them. One Florida veteran, for example, was discharged from the navy in 1944 for engaging in consensual homosexual activities. Despite his blue discharge, he initially used his G.I. Bill benefits to enroll at the LaFrance School of Beauty Culture in Miami. Things were going well for him—the school received five hundred dollars a year for tuition and the veteran received an allowance of fifty dollars a month—until he was featured in an article in the *Miami Herald*. An official in the navy (who apparently knew the sailor and was familiar with the circumstances surrounding his discharge) saw the article and wrote to the VA to ask "if all naval personnel discharged for [homosexuality] will receive the benefits of the laws administered by the Veterans' Administration?" VA headquarters in Washington then notified the local office in Bay Pines, Florida, that the veteran was ineligible for benefits.²⁸

Indeed, it was not at all uncommon for the VA to be aggressive in correcting its mistakes. "The V.A. is hep against these Blue bastards as they told me," observed one undesirable. "My friend Louie is still going to school under his own power and simply takes things as they come," wrote one soldier to a friend. "He recently received a letter from the [VA] 'requesting' him to pay back to the United States Treasury the sum of \$475 that he received under the G.I. Bill." Another soldier who was undesirably discharged for homosexuality managed to qualify for G.I. Bill benefits and used them to obtain his bachelor's degree. After the VA discovered the error, the agency not only demanded repayment but threatened the young man with a civil suit and imprisonment for receiving money under false pretenses. The soldier contacted the Henry Foundation, which then enlisted the help of a U.S. senator to obtain a waiver from the Veterans Administration for the soldier.²⁹

Faced with the specter of the VA coming after them, many veterans did not claim benefits directly but used established channels to protest the denial of an honorable discharge. In the text of the G.I. Bill, Congress had provided for the establishment of boards of review within all branches of service. An undesirably discharged service member's only recourse was to go before a board of review to request that his or her discharge be upgraded to honorable. Some soldiers who decided to fight for an upgrade blamed the military for what had happened to them. "When I entered the army I had certain homosexual tendencies," one explained in a letter to a friend. "Army life developed them into traits of character which I will never be able to change. [This camp] has done the most damage to me and it was here that I fell into a clique of homosexuals that has brought me into the classification of 'confirmed.'"

²⁸ Bob to Harold, Nov. 28, 1944, box 4, World War II Project Records; Francesco to Veterans Administration, New York, Dec. 29, 1945, case 4217128, Veterans' Claims Service (in Canaday's possession); Bureau of Naval Personnel to Veterans Administration, "Enlisted Personnel Discharged with Undesirable Discharges—Veterans' Benefits," memo, March 15, 1945, vol. 2, Policy Series 800.04, Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs; District Civil Readjustment Officer, U.S. Naval Reserve, to Chief of Staff, 7th Naval District, Feb. 21, 1945, *ibid.*; and Hines to Bureau of Naval Personnel, March 25, 1945, *ibid.*

²⁹ Bob to Harold, Nov. 28, 1944, box 4, World War II Project Records; Milqui to Harold, Sept. 20, 1945, *ibid.*; Henry, "Report of the Psychiatrist-in-Chief," 4–5.

The same soldier's mother concurred that the military was responsible for her son's state. "Since the army has had a large part in tearing down your health and mental abilities," she told him, "I see no reason why they should not assume at least part of the responsibility for building you up again."³⁰

As such veterans went through the appeals process they sought out other recipients of blue discharges for help and advice. "I'd appreciate any concrete advice and procedure you can give on how to handle the Veterans' Administration," one veteran wrote another. Undesirably discharged soldiers monitored the situation and kept each other apprised of legal or political changes. This same soldier told his friend of a newspaper article he had read about the blue discharges. "The article stated that none of the stigma of the dishonorable discharge is to go along with the blue and that we are to receive all the benefits of the G.I. Bill."³¹

Blue discharges reached out not only to one another, but to a whole myriad of organizations for assistance. The Veterans' Affairs Office of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) devoted most of its resources to helping African Americans who had received blue discharges, some of whom had been discharged for homosexuality, upgrade their discharges to honorable.³² Some blue discharges wrote to the ACLU—one man discharged for homosexuality contacted the ACLU to recommend himself as a "suitable plaintiff" should the ACLU decide to fight "[VA Administrator] Hines's arbitrary ruling which denies veterans' rights."³³ In New York City the Henry Foundation helped undesirably discharged veterans directly, and the foundation also corresponded with the American Red Cross and the American Legion regarding soldiers discharged for homosexuality. Finally, many undesirably discharged soldiers wrote to members of Congress, some of whom were becoming increasingly vexed by the situation of the blue discharges.³⁴

When Congress enacted the G.I. Bill, members had expressed concern that soldiers who were undesirably discharged would be unfairly denied benefits. The final version of the legislation they passed—which created boards of review within each branch of the service—reflected that concern. While soldiers could attempt to upgrade their discharges through the boards, Congress did not have the foresight to establish any

³⁰ Harold to Blanche, Nov. 18, 1944, box 4, World War II Project Records; "Maw" to Harold, Nov. 20, 1944, *ibid.*

³¹ Milqui to Harold, April 12, 1945, Jan. 8, 1946, *ibid.*

³² See box 59, Defense Department and War Department Correspondence, 1948–1951, part 1, Washington Bureau, Papers of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.).

³³ In this case, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) declined to take action, since it avoided cases where it appeared that homosexual acts had occurred. But ACLU lawyers read Donald Webster Cory's *The Homosexual in America* and expressed concern about possible VA discrimination against homosexuals. Edward Heghinian to Alan Reitman, Nov. 28, 1951, folder 1, box 1127, "Military Discharges," American Civil Liberties Union Collection (Seely G. Mudd Archives, Princeton University, Princeton, N.J.).

³⁴ Henry, "Report of the Psychiatrist-in-Chief," 9; Alfred A. Gross to Charles Cook, Nov. 3, 1949, box 62, Society for the Prevention of Crime Papers; George W. Henry, *All the Sexes: A Study of Masculinity and Femininity* (Toronto, 1955), 372. See, for example, George E. Brown, Veterans' Claims Service, to Congressman Vito Marcantonio, Jan. 1946, Policy Series 800, Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs; Marcantonio to Bradley, Dec. 22, 1945, *ibid.*; Civilian Aide to Secretary of War and Marshall P. Patton, May 8, 1947, Records of the Civil-

appeal mechanism within the VA itself. As members of Congress became increasingly aware of the number of blue discharges denied benefits by VA adjudicators, some members began to feel that the VA was violating the generous intent of the G.I. Bill.

Congressional frustration with the VA's policy on blue discharges first surfaced in fall 1945. Race, not sexuality, was the initial basis of congressional concern, as evidenced by Sen. Edwin Johnson's reading into the *Congressional Record* a series of editorials on the injustice of the blue discharge from an African American paper, the *Pittsburgh Courier*. "There should not be a twilight zone between innocence and guilt," Johnson remarked on the floor of the Senate. But congressional criticism of the VA's policy centered in the Democratic-chaired House Committee on Military Affairs. Concerned about the plight of veterans, seven members of the Committee on Military Affairs formed a special committee that held hearings in fall 1945 and in January 1946 produced a remarkable government document protesting the VA policy on blue discharges. In explaining that the blue discharge targeted those who had committed misconduct, including "sodomy or sex perversion," and those who exhibited undesirable traits of character, including "psychopathic personality manifested by homosexuality," the authors of the report clearly considered soldiers discharged for homosexuality as among the victims of the VA's policy. But in contrast to the VA policy, which singled out soldiers discharged for homosexuality, in making its case for the more liberal extension of benefits, the special committee did not sharply distinguish between soldiers discharged for homosexuality and other recipients of blue discharges.³⁵

Even so, the committee seemed to recognize that the association between the blue discharge and homosexuality exacerbated its stigma. The language of the discharge, between honorable and dishonorable, gave the impression "that there is something radically wrong with the man in question," the committee wrote, "something so mysterious that it cannot be talked about or written down, but must be left to the imagination." The very vagueness of the discharge meant that "moral suspicions are aroused." The stigma surrounding the blue discharge was so powerful, the committee complained, that many of those facing an undesirable discharge "have been known to ask for an out-and-out dishonorable discharge." The report expressed amazement at the numbers who had come forward to complain, thus "publicizing the stigma of having been discharged from the Army under circumstances which savor of disgrace." But those who complained surely spoke for thousands more, "who feel the same sense of injustice but prefer to bury their hurt in as much oblivion as possible."³⁶

ian Aide to the Secretary of War, Subject File, 1940-1947, Records of the Office of the Secretary of War, 1791-1947, RG 107 (National Archives, College Park, Md.); civilian aide's notes concerning cases of individual blue discharges, *ibid.*; Soldier to Hill, Aug. 28, 1946, box 6, World War II Project Records; Sen. C. Wayland Brooks to Vice Adm. Ross T. McIntire, Navy Department, July 18, 1944, box 13, *ibid.*; letter to Hon. Michael Kirwin, file 949, box 86, AGO Legislative and Policy Precedent Files, Records of the Adjutant General's Office.

³⁵ The Special Committee of the Committee on Military Affairs that authored the report on blue discharges comprised Chairman Carl Durham (D., North Carolina), Robert L. F. Sikes (D., Florida), Arthur Winstead (D., Mississippi), Melvin Price (D., Illinois), Thomas E. Martin (R., Iowa), Ivor D. Fenton (R., Pennsylvania), and J. Leroy Johnson (R., California). Many of them were veterans of World War I or World War II. *Appendix to the Congressional Record*, 79 Cong., 1 sess. (1945), p. A4778; Committee on Military Affairs, *Blue Discharges*, 2.

³⁶ Committee on Military Affairs, *Blue Discharges*, 6, 7, 6, 1.

The report protested the unfairness of the blue discharge. Soldiers caught in its web were denied the procedural protections provided to soldiers who were court-martialed. The officers who awarded the blue discharges were not bound by rules of evidence. The military denied candidates for blue discharges counsel, and it did not provide them with a record of hearing proceedings. Its victims were young, inexperienced men and women whose mistakes were often quite minor. The blue discharge would prevent them from receiving benefits, make postwar employment difficult, cause them to be denied admission to many colleges and universities, and, the report claimed, "depress and torture them for the rest of their days." The fact that many of these soldiers had been drafted made the members of the committee especially sympathetic. "Some succumbed to temptations they never met until they entered the Army," the committee wrote, most likely referencing the unprecedented opportunity that life in the military during World War II provided for homosexual activity. The army should eject such men and women from the service, the report argued, but it should not make the "rest of their lives grievous."³⁷

The committee was particularly incensed that the VA had usurped congressional authority in its refusal of benefits to blue discharges. The report argued that the law's awkward phraseology, "under conditions other than dishonorable," reflected a clear congressional desire to distribute benefits broadly. Congress "intended that all persons not actually given a dishonorable discharge should profit by this generosity." By evaluating each undesirable discharge as either under honorable or dishonorable conditions, the VA refused to "take the discharge at its face value." The committee called the VA policy "illogical" and "disingenuous." Asserting that the VA had secured the support of the War Department, the report called the current policy a "squeeze play" by the two agencies. The VA exercised "something like court martial jurisdiction" over soldiers whom the "Army has been unable or unwilling to subject to dishonorable discharge by court martial." The 1946 report concluded with strong recommendations that the VA be stopped "from passing moral verdicts on the history of any soldier" and be required "to accept all veterans but those expressly excluded by Congress in . . . [the G.I. Bill]." Moreover, the committee urged that the blue discharge be eliminated; instead, soldiers demonstrating "inaptness" or "inadaptability" should receive a discharge under honorable conditions.³⁸

As a result of this congressional pressure, the military moved to correct past inequities. "The major difficulty resulting from the past use of the blue discharge is that causes for separations have ranged from honorable to dishonorable," Brig. Gen. John L. Pierce, the president of the secretary of war's Discharge Review Board, explained in a memo. "[Some] government agencies and some industries are attempting to determine whether the blue discharger's separation was under honorable or dishonorable conditions as a prerequisite to either benefits or employment." But the general

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 10–11.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 8, 9, 14. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) raised similar objections, noting that the "Veterans' Administration has ruled that the 'other than dishonorable' clause in the G.I. Bill eliminates most blue discharges, even though the interpretation of this phrase in Army language would admit such persons." William H. Hastie and Jessie Dedmon to Walter White, March 9, 1946, box G-18, group II, NAACP Papers.

explained that often no such distinctions were made, and sometimes blue discharges were automatically considered dishonorable. "In some instances this same view of a blue discharge undoubtedly affects the individual's standing within his community," Pierce concluded.³⁹

To address the issues that the Committee on Military Affairs had raised, the army replaced the blue discharge with a "general discharge" for unsuitability in 1947. The general discharge was considered under honorable conditions, "granted to those found unsuitable as inept but who otherwise meet all qualifications for an honorable discharge." Those who received the general discharge were eligible for all benefits. Simultaneously, for more serious offenses, the military preserved the undesirable discharge, to be awarded without benefits under dishonorable conditions "for unfitness or misconduct as a result of administrative action."⁴⁰

But the spirit of reform only briefly included soldiers charged with homosexuality. The military experimented with awarding honorable discharges (as distinct from the general discharge under honorable conditions) to soldiers who had homosexual tendencies from late 1945 to 1947, but after this brief period of leniency, the military reverted to giving undesirable discharges to soldiers who either committed homosexual acts or had homosexual tendencies.⁴¹ And the VA continued to treat those soldiers as ineligible for benefits.⁴²

Well into the 1950s, many members of Congress remained concerned about soldiers who were undesirably discharged. "Congress has interested itself in the field of discharges, particularly undesirable discharges," noted a 1957 Department of Defense (DOD) memo. By the mid-1950s, in response to an apparent resurgence in the use of the undesirable discharge, members of the House had launched a sustained battle with the secretary of defense's office, hoping to do something for undesirably discharged soldiers, who suffered consequences out of proportion to their offenses while in the military. In 1957 Congressman Clyde Doyle proposed legislation that would enable soldiers to upgrade undesirable discharges if they could prove that their "char-

³⁹ Brig. Gen. John L. Pierce to War Department General Staff, memo, May 13, 1946, file 949, box 86, AGO Legislative and Policy Precedent Files, Records of the Adjutant General's Office.

⁴⁰ Both "inept" and "inaptness" were used in reference to soldiers eligible for the general discharge. *New York Times*, May 21, 1947, p. 4; Committee on Military Affairs, *Blue Discharges*, 14.

⁴¹ From October 1945 to 1947, the War Department mandated that enlisted personnel with homosexual tendencies who had committed no homosexual acts in service be granted honorable discharges. In 1947 this lenient policy was reversed: although soldiers with homosexual tendencies who had not committed homosexual acts were technically eligible for an honorable discharge, most so charged received undesirable discharges, as did soldiers who had engaged in consensual homosexual acts. See Louis Jolyon West and Albert J. Glass, "Sexual Behavior and the Military Law," in *Sexual Behavior and the Law*, ed. Ralph Slovenko (Springfield, 1965), 254-55; and Colin J. Williams and Martin S. Weinberg, *Homosexuals and the Military: A Study of Less Than Honorable Discharge* (New York, 1971), 26-29.

⁴² Bérubé, *Coming Out under Fire*, 230. See also R. J. Novotny, Assistant Deputy Administrator, to Manager, VA Regional Office, Los Angeles, California, Jan. 24, 1955, obtained through FOIA request to Department of Veterans Affairs (in Canaday's possession). In 1979 the VA ruled that only homosexual acts involving aggravating circumstances would constitute dishonorable conditions and preclude benefits. Keith Snyder, "V.A. Eases Bar to Benefits for Certain Homosexual Veterans," *Clearinghouse Review*, 13 (March 1980), 878; Katherine Bourdonnay, *Fighting Back: Lesbian and Gay Draft, Military, and Veterans' Issues* (Chicago, 1985), 100.

acter, conduct, activities, and habits since [being] granted [the] original discharge [had] been good for . . . not less than three years." The proposed bill eliminated the stigma of an undesirable discharge for those who had acted as good citizens in civilian life. But because the bill stipulated that soldiers who had their discharges upgraded would receive no additional benefits—the reform would only remove "unearned stigma [from] deserving men and women"—the bill also preserved the military's fundamental principle that benefits would go to good soldiers rather than good civilians.⁴³

In many ways an outgrowth of the 1946 House report *Blue Discharges*, this later campaign to help recipients of undesirable discharges differed in one critical aspect. In the years immediately following World War II, lawmakers had been concerned with the fate of *all* blue discharges. The 1946 report included soldiers discharged for homosexuality as among those unfairly victimized by the VA's benefits policy—indeed, the report did not always distinguish between them and others receiving blue discharges. The 1957 Doyle bill eliminated such blurriness. Its intent was to salvage the reputations of those who suffered from the association between the blue discharge and homosexuality, an association that had become more stigmatizing as the linkage between Communism and homosexuality tightened during the red scare of the early 1950s. Since the legislation would have no impact on benefits, its only effect seemed to be to mark certain undesirably discharged soldiers as nonhomosexuals.

Doyle and his colleagues saw the proposed legislation as addressing a long-standing inequity: "An admitted homosexual, or an admitted user of narcotics is awarded an undesirable discharge," noted a report by Doyle's special subcommittee on military discharges. "So, also, is the man who is discharged administratively for committing a series of petty offenses." Was it reasonable, asked the committee's attorney, John Blandford, during hearings on military discharges, "this lumping together" of undesirably discharged veterans "with . . . homo[s]?" Should a boy who had gone AWOL on several occasions, he asked, "go through his life with the same stigma as one who is an admitted homosexual?" To make his point, Blandford asked a Department of Defense official if, in giving out dinner invitations, he would distinguish between homosexuals and others with blue discharges. "I certainly would not be . . . anxious to invite homosexuals to my home," the official replied. The House report on the legislation urged that "immediate steps be taken to differentiate by class among the various types of undesirable discharges."⁴⁴

⁴³ Ad Hoc Committee on Administrative Discharges, memo, c. 1957, file 211, box 36, AGO Legislative and Policy Precedent Files, Records of the Adjutant General's Office. On the rise of undesirable discharge rates in the mid-1950s, see "Administrative Discharges: Policies, Procedures, Criteria," Feb. 1960, p. 9, *ibid.* U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services, *Hearings before Special Subcommittee on H.R. 1108*, 85 Cong., 1 sess., June 24, 1957; *Congressional Record*, 85 Cong., 1 sess., Aug. 5, 1957, p. 13666. After committee hearings, the Doyle bill was redrafted and introduced as H.R. 8722. The new bill made more explicit that the armed services were required to consider good conduct in civil life but could consider it in tandem with the circumstances of the original discharge.

⁴⁴ U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services, *Hearings on H.R. 8722*, 85 Cong., 1 sess., July 23, 1957, p. 3217; Committee on Armed Services, *Hearings before Special Subcommittee on H.R. 1108*, 2379, 2366; U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services, *House Report to Accompany H.R. 8722*, 85 Cong., 1 sess., July 23, 1957, p. 6.

The method of differentiation varied. Initially, the legislation proposed to give soldiers an upgraded discharge, but the military balked at the idea that civilian conduct should have any bearing on one's military service record. In a gesture of compromise with the secretary of defense, Doyle later introduced legislation that would allow the original discharge to stand but provided soldiers with good civilian behavior with an "Exemplary Rehabilitation Certificate" that they could show to prospective employers. Both proposals aimed to provide a way to distinguish those individuals who were not "undesirables in the accepted sense of the word and who [had] established themselves in society following their separation from the service."⁴⁵

Since the Doyle legislation was designed, in part, to give undesirably discharged soldiers a way to prove to prospective employers and community members that they were not homosexual, it is hardly surprising that a respectable heterosexual life-style was one way to demonstrate the civic good behavior that Doyle's committee pointed to as entitling a veteran to a fresh start. One undesirably discharged soldier, for example, was late returning from leave on several occasions. But "after getting out of the service, he has assumed the position of a man," one congressman explained, "and has done a very commendable job of providing for his family." Another man, described during hearings as the sort that the proposed legislation could help, returned home with his undesirable discharge and "has accepted a position in a trucking firm, has a family of his own, and has become a very good citizen." Yet another soldier "made a fool of himself on [liquor]" when he was in the service. But after being given a blue discharge, the man married, obtained a decent job, and had two children. "He wanted to get a veteran's loan to acquire a home for his children, his wife, and himself," the author of the bill reported. The legislation under consideration would not make a loan available to such a man, but it would confer on him a symbol of first-class citizenship. The proposed legislation thus protected certain soldiers and their families from the stigma of the undesirable discharge. In this way, the Doyle bill stood in contrast to current discharge policy which, as one congressman pointed out, left young fathers holding discharge papers that their sons would not understand when they found them in "daddy's drawer." All "the 8 year old . . . sees," this congressman concluded, "is undesirable."⁴⁶

Forty members of Congress had introduced similar or identical bills, and the Doyle bill passed the House with nearly unanimous support. But the military strongly objected to the bill on the grounds that military discipline would be damaged if the Congress violated the military's basic principle that "an honorable discharge should be given only for honorable military service." Accordingly, when the Senate Armed Services Committee asked for the Pentagon's report on the legislation, the Pentagon stalled for two and a half months, long enough that the legislation died in Senate committee. But Doyle was tenacious, continuing to reintroduce a version of the bill in several following sessions of Congress. Each time, the bill received unan-

⁴⁵ *Congressional Record*, 86 Cong., 1 sess., Jan. 27, 1959, pp. 1213-14; *ibid.*, June 2, 1959, p. 9575; Committee on Armed Services, *House Report to Accompany H.R. 8722*, 6.

⁴⁶ *Congressional Record*, 85 Cong., 1 sess., Aug. 5, 1957, p. 13674; Committee on Armed Services, *Hearings before Special Subcommittee on H.R. 1108*, 2606, 2476, 2379.

imous or nearly unanimous support in the House only to be blocked by military opposition on the Senate side. Finally, in 1966, Congress passed a watered-down version of the bill. It specified that the secretary of labor (rather than the Department of Defense) would issue the "Exemplary Rehabilitation Certificate," which would in no way affect the original military discharge.⁴⁷

While the military strongly disagreed with Congressman Doyle's assertion that the undesirable discharge was often too punitive, the Department of Defense and congressional proponents of the Doyle bill agreed about one thing: soldiers discharged for homosexuality did *not* deserve lenient treatment. An internal 1957 DOD memo that proposed administrative changes to the military's discharge policy in order to avoid "the necessity for legislation of the type represented by . . . [Doyle]" warned against any changes that would remove the military's authority to discharge homosexuals. Clyde Doyle would undoubtedly have agreed with this provision of the proposed policy. On the floor of the House, Doyle explained that he had decided that the undesirable discharge had some value (and should not be eliminated entirely) when he thought of the situation, "true of homosexuals," where "individuals admit to having certain undesirable traits but cannot . . . be legally convicted by court martial."⁴⁸

The way the Doyle legislation proposed to rehabilitate certain soldiers was itself a powerful statement that an undesirable discharge had become even more stigmatizing in the 1950s than it was immediately after World War II. The greater stigma was the result of two factors: First, in response to the 1946 House report on blue discharges, the military had begun to give general discharges to some of those whose discharges fell between honorable and dishonorable. In making the general discharge unavailable to soldiers discharged for homosexuality—and in continuing the World War II-era practice of using the undesirable discharge in such cases—the military heightened the association between undesirability and homosexuality. Second, the increasing centrality of homophobia in 1950s political culture—expressed most vividly in a 1950 congressional investigation into "sex perverts" in the federal government—made the suspicion that homosexuality might lurk behind one's undesirable discharge even more damaging than it had been immediately after the war.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Committee on Armed Services, *Hearings before Special Subcommittee on H.R. 1108*, 2359. A legislative history is provided in U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services, *Hearings on H.R. 16646, H.R. 15053, and H.R. 10267*, 89 Cong., 2 sess., July 26, 1966, p. 10286. The bill was enacted as Pub. L. No. 89-690, 80 Stat. 1017 (1966). *Congressional Record*, 89 Cong., 2 sess., Oct. 4, 1966, p. 25083; *ibid.*, Oct. 18, 1966, p. 27390.

⁴⁸ Proposed DOD Directive, May 6, 1957, file 211, box 37, AGO Legislative and Policy Precedent Files, Records of the Adjutant General's Office. *Congressional Record*, 85 Cong., 1 sess., Aug. 5, 1957, p. 133667. Clyde Doyle's position on homosexuality did not stop the Department of Defense (DOD) from exploiting homosexuality to argue against the bill: "Should H.R. 1108 be enacted," the DOD wrote, "a person administratively discharged as a homosexual . . . could demand that he be issued the same type of honorable discharge to which a combat veteran with a splendid record would be entitled, simply by establishing that his post-service conduct had been good." Committee on Armed Services, *House Report to Accompany H.R. 8722*, 11.

⁴⁹ U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Expenditures in Executive Departments, *Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government*, 81 Cong., 2 sess., 1950. On Cold War homophobia and political culture more generally, see Cuordileone, "Politics in an Age of Anxiety"; John D'Emilio, *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University* (New York, 1992), 57–73; David Kenneth Johnson, "The Lavender Scare: Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Civil Service, 1945–1975" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 2000); and Randolph William Baxter, "Eradicating This Menace: Homophobia and Anti-Communism in Congress, 1947–1955" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Irvine, 1999).

The impulse to protect some undesirably discharged veterans from the stigma of homosexuality was a major impetus behind the Doyle bill in its various incarnations. After its enactment, the legislation helped to lessen the stigma of homosexuality for some undesirably discharged (presumably) heterosexual soldiers, while leaving them in a benefitless limbo of good citizenship.⁵⁰ That legislators were not more concerned with restoring benefits to those soldiers is evidence not only of how much *closer* Congress had moved to the VA in its antipathy toward homosexuality but also of how much *further* it had moved from New Deal aspirations to distribute state resources broadly among the citizenry.

In the postwar period, the G.I. Bill of Rights was one of the primary instruments that the state used to channel resources toward the citizenry. The right of soldiers to the basic economic entitlements that would enable them to be productive citizens would have perfectly exemplified social citizenship as T. H. Marshall defined it, if such entitlements had been extended broadly to the entire citizenry. But social citizenship—as it grew on American soil—ended up being a good deal less democratic than Marshall might have hoped, and not only because the basic provisions of the G.I. Bill were never extended beyond soldiers. Rather, as Marshall recognized, social citizenship both possessed great democratic potential and operated as an “architect of . . . social inequality.”⁵¹

An examination of the VA's policy on homosexuality illustrates this point particularly well. A majority of the male and female soldiers who experienced or acted upon homosexual desire during World War II were G.I. Bill beneficiaries. “You know as well as I that there have been many ‘homosexuals’ in the Navy and the Army,” one soldier frankly told Secretary of the Navy Forrestal, and “that many have been discharged ‘under honorable conditions’ because they were undiscovered.” The surgeon general of the army conceded in 1946 that “following confidential research studies it is known that homosexuals were inducted into the service” and that “most of them served long and faithfully.”⁵² These soldiers were able to use G.I. Bill benefits to start businesses, buy homes, and attend college.⁵³ But given the reach of the military establishment's antihomosexual apparatus, the down payment that these soldiers made on

⁵⁰ There is an interesting parallel here to David R. Roediger's argument that attaining the status of whiteness compensates for economic exploitation; avoiding the stigma of homosexuality seemed more important than collecting the material benefits of the G.I. Bill (at least to policy makers). Thanks to Kevin Murphy for pointing this out. David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London, 1999).

⁵¹ *Time* magazine observed in 1950 that veterans and their families constituted nearly half the nation's population. Bennett, *When Dreams Came True*, ix. And Theda Skocpol and others have described veterans' benefits as a cornerstone of the American welfare state. Amenta and Skocpol, “Redefining the New Deal,” 94. Marshall, “Citizenship and Social Class,” 93.

⁵² See Bérubé, *Coming Out under Fire*, 245. Robert Schott to Forrestal, July 16, 1946, box 15, World War II Project Records; Norman T. Kirk to Assistant to the Secretary of War, July 20, 1946, box 17, *ibid*.

⁵³ All of which may have furthered the development of urban subcultures that were a precondition for the gay rights movement. See D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*. For the argument that the gay rights movement was in part motivated by the unfair treatment of gay and lesbian soldiers in the military and under the G.I. Bill and that “the campaign against blue discharges, introduced the concepts of ‘rights,’ ‘injustice,’ and ‘discrimination’ to public discussions of homosexuality,” see Bérubé, *Coming Out under Fire*, 249, 253.

their G.I. Bill entitlements was remaining hidden while in the service. For such individuals, the state's allocation of veterans' benefits may have been internally fragmenting—providing possibilities for a better life even while stigmatizing central elements of it.⁵⁴

In essence, the military establishment used the G.I. Bill to build a closet within federal social policy. The closet depended upon the visible exclusion of certain soldiers believed to have engaged in homosexual acts or to possess homosexual tendencies. The closet simultaneously allowed for the inclusion of many soldiers who experienced homosexuality during World War II. But the invisibility of those soldiers was critical because it enabled military and VA officials to pretend that homosexual soldiers had not defended their country, that they could not meet the obligations of good citizens. This sleight of hand in turn highlighted the masculinism of the citizen-soldier. "War is not a petting party," remarked one congressman during debate on the G.I. Bill, "it is not a powder puff affair."⁵⁵

Such masculinism also helped conceal another type of soldier—women—and ensured that women's contributions to the war effort would also be minimized. This made it more difficult for women veterans to claim their benefits as rights they had earned and reinforced lawmakers in upholding the gender inequities that had been written into the G.I. Bill legislation. The G.I. Bill offered the most generous benefits to married men—shoring up their position as family providers through dependency allowances and survivors' benefits.⁵⁶ Women's benefits—particularly allowances granted to care for dependents—were inferior to men's to begin with, and women veterans also faced hostility from the veterans' organizations that helped so many male veterans obtain their G.I. Bill benefits.⁵⁷ Most critically, the fact that the military capped women's participation in the military at 2 percent of the total force (until

⁵⁴ In one "Armed Forces Talk" distributed to unit commanders, soldiers were warned that homosexuality and sexual perversion were grounds for an undesirable discharge and that "eligibility for veterans' preference in Federal employment, for payments for service-connected disability, for a pension, and for many other benefits and privileges . . . will depend upon the type of discharge you receive." Armed Forces Talk 288, file 211, box 36, AGO's Legislative and Policy Precedent Files, Records of the Adjutant General's Office.

⁵⁵ On *masculinism*, defined as "those features of the state that signify, enact, sustain, and represent masculine power as a form of dominance," see Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton, 1995), 167. Committee on World War Veterans' Legislation, *Hearings on H.R. 3917 and S. 1767*, 203. The speaker was chairman John Rankin.

⁵⁶ Women's service was rendered invisible by devaluing women's actual military service as well as their work in war industries. On the G.I. Bill's selective generosity, see Cohen, *Consumers' Republic*, 137–39; and June A. Willenz, *Women Veterans: America's Forgotten Heroines* (New York, 1983), 169. Legislators intended that widows of deceased male veterans receive their husbands' benefits (and the use of dead or disabled husbands' veterans' preference points) as derivative from the men who had "earned" them, rather than as women's own entitlements. Ritter, "Of War and Virtue," 223. "The G.I. Bill dispensed privileges to as much as one quarter of the population . . . and at the same time confirmed the rightness of a family model in which the male head was the most secure and best skilled provider in the household," according to Cott, *Public Vows*, 191.

⁵⁷ The "assumption that women were economic dependents not supporters" undermined benefits for women veterans, according to Hartmann, *Home Front and Beyond*, 44. Women veterans could not collect unemployment benefits until they demonstrated that they were not receiving support from a male wage earner. Male dependency distressed legislators; hence women veterans attending college collected smaller allowances for dependent spouses than did male veterans. Cohen, *Consumers' Republic*, 138. Similarly, unmarried widows, but not widowers, of veterans were eligible for G.I. loans for homes, farms, and businesses. Benefits for dependents of women veterans were equalized in 1972. Willenz, *Women Veterans*, 169, 193. On discrimination against women in veterans' counseling by veterans' organizations, see Cohen, *Consumers' Republic*, 138.

1967) circumscribed women's overall access to the G.I. Bill, automatically directing 98 percent of state resources allocated for veterans toward men. All of this ensured that most women would experience the expansion of social citizenship through their husbands' benefits.⁵⁸

The G.I. Bill did more than just create a closet, then. It also institutionalized heterosexuality by channeling resources to men so that—at a moment when women had made significant gains in the workplace—the economic incentives for women to marry remained firmly in place. The institutionalization of heterosexuality in federal policy was a two-part process that required the state to provide economic support for marriage (through male breadwinners) while it stigmatized homosexuality. Still, wives might collect benefits, and so might numerous soldiers who had expressed homosexual desire during the war. But the shakiness of their claims only highlighted the dignified and easy access to benefits that the prototypical heterosexual male citizen-soldier enjoyed. How the G.I. Bill *excluded* certain soldiers from the benefits of social citizenship must be understood, then, in tandem with how it *included* them; that inclusion not only shored up male and heterosexual privilege but also simultaneously relied on those who differed from the normative to reveal the most deserving strata of the citizenry.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ *New York Times*, July 26, 1946, p. 18; Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies*, 227. "The G.I. Bill . . . increased the gap between men and women in opportunities and status," according to Hartmann, *Home Front and Beyond*, 26. Not all women who served in the military during World War II were eligible for G.I. Bill benefits. Not until 1980 were women who served in the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (the predecessor to the WAC) and the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs, the air force equivalent of the WAC) awarded veterans' benefits. Willenz, *Women Veterans*, 169. Women were also incorporated into Social Security—the other major component of social citizenship—primarily through their husbands' benefits. See Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity*, chap. 3.

⁵⁹ On the history of state economic support for marriage, see Cott, *Public Vows*; Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity*; and Peggy Pascoe, "Race, Gender, and the Privileges of Property: On the Significance of Miscegenation Law," in *Over the Edge: Remapping the American West*, ed. Valerie J. Matsumoto and Blake Allmendinger (Berkeley, 1999), 215–30. Implementation of the G.I. Bill also reinforced the whiteness of the normative citizen. Many black soldiers received dishonorable or undesirable discharges, making them ineligible for the G.I. Bill. But even black soldiers who were eligible experienced difficulty collecting their benefits: veterans' organizations denied them membership; those who approached the VA for help sometimes faced hostility; white colleges refused them admission; housing loans were often useless for them because the VA required veterans to qualify at private banks, many of which refused to qualify black veterans for loans. Cohen, *Consumers' Republic*, 167–73. For the argument that the G.I. Bill was of limited use to black veterans in the South because of racial discrimination and poor administration, see Onkst, "First a Negro . . . Incidentally a Veteran."

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